**Educational Policy Committee**

**October 3, 2018**

**Minutes**

**Committee Members Attending:** Watkins (chair), Webb, Lotto, Zhang, Hoelscher, Gunter, Bodzin, Liu, Li, Moreida, Piispanen, Elroukh, Wesson (ex officio), Phillips (ex officio).

**Guests:** Bell, Jensen, McClaind, Szczepanski, Tonkay, Wilson, Zalatan.

The committee chair called the meeting to order

The committee made minor changes to the draft minutes that had been circulated. As revised, the minutes were approved unanimously.

**First agenda item: Grade Inflation (presentation by Frank Gunter)**

Frank Gunter presented data on undergraduate grade distribution, noting the proportion of A and A- grades. He presented a handout on grade inflation and questions related to a high proportion of grades at Lehigh, and referred to multiple studies and references on issues surrounding grade inflation at universities generally. He pointed out that universities monitor the grades given by instructors­—particularly graduate students and professors of practice—and proposed that the committee consider proposing standards for grades. One sort of proposal might be that in an introductory-level course with a certain threshold of students, only a certain percentage—say, 20—of grades could be A grades. He argued that faculty have an incentive to decrease their time on teaching (including assignments and grading), and increase their time on research. Given this, and noting that in the past a subcommittee to examine this issue existed, he moved that the committee establish a subcommittee to examine issues of grade inflation and grade compression.

The committee discussed this proposal: students prefer smaller, more regular assessments to a few high-stakes assignments or exams; what motivates deep thinking and deep learning; the amount of work that students do, and grade inflation—with points that these might not be related; whether it matters if we look at grades in courses versus overall GPAs; the role of faculty incentives and disincentives.

The chair called for a second to the motion, with the clarification would be that there would be a focus on an incentive structure to encourage student learning, rather than workload and grade inflation more narrowly.

The motion was seconded; discussion followed that the subcommittee charge was unclear. With consensus of the committee, Professor Gunter agreed to remove the motion from the table, and to prepare a written proposal that would define the scope and goals of the subcommittee.

**Second agenda item: R&P 5.2.3.1.5, Determination of Student Classification**

Linda Bell presented information on determining the class-standing classification of students, pointing out that we currently define credit hour requirements for classification and that these differ, sometime significantly, across college and various programs.

These definitions have not been reviewed for at least several years and are not transparent to students or others. Is it time for a change? Should we standardize? For example, a good number of schools use 30/60/90 systems to define class standing. Discussion focused on several issues, including:

* How would this affect students who enter with AP credit or other credit?
* Would this disadvantage those who do not have AP credit, in terms of earlier registration? (Generally not, as those students would be competing with fewer students with advanced standing due to entering AP or other credit)
* How would this be implemented, and what would be the effects of this in other policy areas, such as credits required for college switching? i.e. college switching requires a specific number of credits currently required for sophomore status.

The chair stated that there is general agreement that we need a university-wide standard, agreed to form an ad hoc subcommittee of the RAS and associate deans to further explore potential unintended consequences, and develop recommendations for a standard.